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Comparing the Reinventing Government Movement with the New Public Administration

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In this article, the reinventing government movement is compared with the new public administration along six dimensions. A strongly felt need to change bureaucracy informed each movement, although each would change bureaucracy differently. Both movements seek relevance and responsiveness, but in different ways. Issues of rationality, methodology, and epistemology are more important in the new public administration than in the reinventing government movement. Both movements conceptualize organization similarly. The reinventing government movement has a stronger commitment to market approaches for the provision of public services and to mechanisms for individual choice. Reinventing government is popular electoral politics for executives (presidents, governors, mayors) and is more radical than new public administration. The new public administration prompted subtle, incremental shifts toward democratic management practices and social equity. The results of reinventing government, so far, are short-run increases in efficiency purchased at a likely long-range cost in administrative capacity and social equity.

No movement associated with the administrative aspects of modern American government has had the visibility of reinventing government. The phrase reinventing government has entered the lexicon of government, and the constellation of ideas associated with it appears to have been extensively influential in the practices of government management at all levels (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992; Report of the National Performance Review, 1993). Only time will tell if the reinventing movement will be the revolution its advocates seek and will have the staying power of the progressive reform movement of the turn of the century, out of which much of modern public administration emerged, or the positive government era of the 1940s and 1950s, which shaped the character of the modern field.

American public administration is alive with debates, arguments, and discussions of the strengths and weaknesses of the reinventing government paradigm (Kettl, 1994; DiIulio, Garvey, and Kettl, 1993; Goodsell, 1993; Moe, 1993; Rosenbloom, 1994; Carroll, 1995; Nathan, 1995). Because this is not the first attempted revolution in the field, it is useful to compare it with earlier movements. Here I compare the new public administration that started in the late 1960s and has a continuing literature (Marini, 1971; Frederickson, 1980; Waldo, 1971; Frederickson and Chandler, 1989) to the reinventing government movement of the early 1990s.¹

I compare new public administration with reinventing government along six dimensions of public administration: concepts of change; concepts of relevance and empowerment; theories of rationality; organizational structure and design; theories of management and leadership; and epistemology, methodology, and the issue of values.

Concepts of Change

The need for change is the dominant theme in both the new public administration and in the reinventing government movement. Because both movements were in some sense revolutionary, it is axiomatic that the adherents to the movements were disappointed with the status quo and called for change. In some respects, members of the two movements were disappointed with the same things and were (are) seeking the same changes (Table 1).

The new public administration developed a comparatively sophisticated concept of change, in part because change was the gear driving the other gears of the argument. The concept of change and other concepts were set out in three-column tables with the headings "From," "Transition," and "To." The new public administration attempted to describe the then-current (say 1968) state of affairs under "From"; the desired objective under "To," and the transition between the two. These three-column tables were applied to many concepts of public administration, such as rationality, organization structure, management, and so forth. One new public administration conception of change is presented in Table 2.

Obviously, the new public administration conception of change was rather process oriented, involving changeable or malleable organizational forms, developing criteria by which to judge effectiveness, institutionalizing change processes, emphasizing decrements as much as increments, and identifying change facilitation as the primary responsibility of leadership. The new public administration also was skeptical about technology as a solution to organizational or policy problems; indeed, it was argued that technology was more often the cause of government problems than the solution.

A key point in the new public administration's conception of change was based on systems logic. Public organizations are embedded in a dynamic social/political ecology. Organizations tend to stability, as most bureaucratic models would verify, whereas the context of the organization is very dynamic. By definition,

Table 1
Similarities in the Changes Sought by the New Public Administration and Reinventing Government

New Public Administration	Reinventing Government
1. Too much trust in expertise and organizational capability and too little questioning of bureaucratic ways	1. The bankruptcy of bureaucracy
2. Flexibility and the routinization of change; adapting to turbulence	2. Innovation and entrepreneurial activity
3. Not enough concern for citizens' demands and needs	3. Customer empowerment
4. An over-optimistic view of what government can or should accomplish	4. From bureaucratic service to individual empowerment.

Table 2
New Public Administration Concept of Change

From	Transition	To
The problem is basically one of reform or change (putting right that which is wrong).	Change and reorganization should be encouraged.	The problem is one of institutionalizing change procedures, recognizing that things put right are unlikely to stay right.
Rapid social change is a transient phenomenon needing to be weathered and adjusted to.	Organization must attempt to respond to rapid social change (reduce lag).	Rapid social change is a permanent phenomenon needing to be facilitated and capitalized upon.
The problems occasioned by uncertainty, complexity, and rapidity of change require larger investments in organizational machinery increments and development.	The problems occasioned by uncertainty, complexity, and rapidity of change require modifying already established machinery.	The problems occasioned by uncertainty, complexity, and rapidity of change require larger investments in decrements and devolution.

then, there are problems, through time, in reconciling organizational statics and social/political dynamics.

Although change as a phenomenon is central to reinventing government, the details of the idea of change are not central to the argument. Change is articulated in dichotomous couplets such as:

- steering rather than rowing
- empowering rather than serving
- replacing bureaucratic processes with market processes
- meeting the needs of customers, not the bureaucracy
- earning rather than spending
- preventing rather than curing
- moving from hierarchy to participating and teamwork

These couplets are somewhat similar to the From and To columns in the new public administration. But the conceptual and theoretical nuances found in the new public administration literature are significantly different from the "success stories" of the reinventing government movement. Part of the difference can probably be explained by the fact that the new public administration was largely developed by scholars, theorists, and researchers, although there were many practitioner fellow travelers. Reinventing government is largely the work of commentator-journalist-government specialist David Osborne and former city manager, now lecturer-trainer, Ted Gaebler.

Throughout the reinventing government literature is the argument that the "bureaucratic paradigm" is the problem. The bureaucracy problem is certainly also a part of the rationale for the new public administration but is less central to the argument and is less often used as a straw man. The reason is rather obvious. In the new public administration, both good and bad bureaucracies and bureaucratic practices are identified. New public administration advocates understand that solutions to bureaucratic problems are often surprisingly bureaucratic or organizational in character. Reinventing government advocates seem to insist that their proposed reforms or solutions are really not bureaucratic or organizational. In fact, reinventing reforms are to be empowering to bureaucrats and would give bureaucrats greater latitude by cutting

red tape. Both new public administration and reinventing government would reform bad bureaucracy and replace it with good bureaucracy. New public administration faces this paradox squarely. Reinventing government does not.

The context of the two movements also affected their respective views of change. New public administration emerged from a period of urban riots, long-term discrimination against racial minorities, and a failing and deadly war in Southeast Asia. The theme was turbulence, particularly political turbulence. Even though new public administration emerged in a pre-Watergate, pre-Proposition 13 time when positive government was still acceptable, the seeds of the modern antigovernment era were sown in that political turbulence. It was the beginning of an extensive cynicism and skepticism toward government.

In this context, the reinventing government movement emerged. The antibureaucratic thesis of reinventing government certainly fits the mood of contemporary times. It is especially interesting that reinventing government, while highly critical of government administration, was built largely on successful managerial and administrative innovations drawn from American state and local governments (Osborne, 1988) and that it argues that by such changes and innovations government can be positive once again, but in a different way. Given the present antigovernmental mood, the reinventing government movement, even with its weaknesses and excesses, is a rather remarkable argument for positive government.

In recent years, change continues to be the theme, but now it is *political*—as against organizational—change. In the eyes of many citizens, the bureaucracy may be less a problem than are elected incumbents. Term limits, balanced budgets, unfunded mandates, deregulation, the deficit, and getting Congress to follow the rules imposed on others, seem to be just as politically attractive as one more round of downsizing the bureaucracy. But *change* is still the point.

Concepts of Relevance, Responsiveness, and Empowerment

New public administration and reinventing government both emphasize responsiveness, but in different ways and in different words. Their differences are deeper than words, constituting not only divergent assumptions about the nature of government and public administration but different political philosophies.

The new public administration was a call for relevance, which at the time meant responsiveness to the pressing issues of the day—poverty, racial injustice, the Vietnam War—as well as long traditions of specific bureaucracies in close relationships with supportive interest groups serving the interests of the advantaged. The strongest expression of this perspective is that

conventional and classic public administration seeks to answer either of these questions: (1) How can we offer more or better services with available resources (efficiency)? or (2) How can service levels be maintained while spending less money (economy)? A new public administration adds this question: Does this service enhance social equity? To say that a service may be well managed and that a service may be efficient and economical,

still begs these questions: Well managed for whom? Efficient for whom? Economical for whom? Traditionally public administration assumed a convenient oneness to the public (Frederickson, 1980).

The careful student of reinvention will note several interesting parallels between the new public administration and reinventing government. The values are somewhat similar. For example, “worker and citizen participation in decision making” in new public administration is very similar to the “empowerment of customers” and the “empowerment of public employees” in reinvention. Similarly, “citizen choice” is rather like “customer-driven government”; “reduction of managerial monopoly over a particular public service” are like “meeting the needs of the customer, not the bureaucracy”; “measuring performance” and “setting performance targets” is like “mission-driven government” and “results-oriented government.” Both perspectives call for the extensive use of surveys, hearings, customer (citizen) councils, experimentation (test marketing), and a range of feedback mechanisms such as suggestion boxes and program evaluations.

The fundamental difference between the two movements in both assumptions and philosophy regarding responsiveness has to do with the role of citizens versus customers. Much of the new public administration literature is tied to an elevated conception of citizenship, a vision of the informed, active citizen participating “beyond the ballot box” in a range of public activities with both elected and appointed public servants. This perspective is rather like the “strong democracy” argument and is relatively compatible with the contemporary communitarian movement (Barber, 1984). It assumes that citizens have much more than individual and self-serving interests in government and public administration.

The use of the customer metaphor in the reinventing government perspective borrows heavily from utilitarian logic, the public choice model, and the modern application of market economics to government. In this model, the empowered customer makes individual (or family) choices in a competitive market, thus breaking the bureaucratic service monopoly. The values of individual satisfaction are judged to be more important than the values of achieving collective democratic consensus. The public official is to develop choices for empowered choice makers rather than build a community. Obviously, the reinvention perspective is compatible with both the American commitment to business values and the modern political interest in less government.

Another critical difference has to do with the new public administration commitment to the public service and to the effective and equitable provision of public services. Issues of individual and collective public service responsibility for the implementation of public policy are fundamental to both traditional and new public administration. The ethics of public administration, particularly the humanistic (democratic, participatory administration) ethic and the social equity ethic, are fundamental to both.

In the reinventing government movement, “service” is the enemy, to be defeated by empowered citizens making choices and empowered public servants arranging public choices. Both reinventing government and new public administration seek responsiveness and relevance. Both exhibit frustration with bureaucratic models, and both suggest somewhat similar solutions. But these similarities are rather more superficial than the deeply different

philosophical presuppositions regarding who is to be served and how.

Theories of Rationality

Virtually from the beginning of the field, rationality has been central to public administration. Simon's (1945) positivist challenge to the "principles" and his definition of management as a decision science was an important turning point. It is important to remember that the Simon perspective was described as a logical positivist construction of means-ends analysis that exchanged the old policy-administration dichotomy for a new dichotomy of agreed-upon goals (ends) and the rational application of resources (means) to achieving those goals. Lindblom's "muddling through" (1959) and Etzioni's "mixed scanning" (1967) provided a more sophisticated understanding of decision making. The new public administration emerged at a time when rationality was being challenged. It was influenced particularly by the writings of James March and Johan Olsen (1976) in political science and Karl Weick (1969) in organization theory. The standard new public administration conception of rationality is, in fact, "buffered rationality." Buffered is used here to describe the best effects of rationality but stripped of some of its undesirable side effects. In buffered rationality, there may be general agreement as to the need for schools. This does not mean that there is agreement as to what constitutes education or what exactly those schools ought to be doing. We presumably know how to educate although we now know there are serious limitations on what we always presumed to be our capabilities in this field. The same could be said for law enforcement and national defense. Therefore, buffered rationality would argue that a shorter term, less fundamental approach contains fewer social and political risks and is probably better suited to public organizations (Frederickson, 1980).

March's recent book (1994), *A Primer on Decision-Making: How Decisions Happen*, is a highly developed, continuing articulation of this perspective. It assumes the importance of expertise, institutions, merit, performance, redundancy, coordination, and leadership.

When one considers the issue of rationality, at an operational level, the reinventing government movement resembles new public administration. For example, the argument that it is essential to shift from rowing to steering is rather like the new public administration argument that experts know how to do things—the more difficult problem is knowing what to do. The mission-driven and results-oriented foci of reinventing are somewhat similar in both tone and substance. In the reinvention model, the "tax-and-spend" or "tax-and-service" approach is too bureaucratic, too focused on rowing. Osborne and Gaebler put it this way (1992).

entrepreneurial governments have begun to shift to systems that separate policy decisions (steering) from service delivery (rowing). Drucker long ago noted that successful organizations separate top management from operations, so as to allow 'top management to concentrate on decision making and direction.' Operations, Drucker said, should be run by separate staffs, 'each with its own mission and goals, and with its own sphere of action and autonomy.' Otherwise, managers will be

distracted by operations tasks and basic steering decisions will not get made.

Steering requires people who see the entire universe of issues and possibilities and can balance competing demands for resources. Rowing requires people who focus intently on one mission and perform it well. Steering organizations need to find the best methods to achieve their goals. Rowing organizations tend to defend 'their' method at all costs.

Entrepreneurial governments increasingly divest rowing from steering. This leaves government operating basically as a skillful buyer, leveraging the various producers in ways that will accomplish its policy objectives.

In a subtle way, the steering-rowing metaphor reintroduces the policy-administration dichotomy. In doing so, it diminishes the "doing" part of government to "just" service, something that any agency, bureau, or private firm can provide. Policy making and steering are the real work of reinventors. Something of the queen bee-worker bee tone characterizes this argument. While in some ways similar, the new public administration version does not diminish the importance of policy implementation nor assume a dichotomy between policy and administration that is seldom found in the existential world.

The reinventing government dichotomy between mission-driven government and rule-driven government is another expression of differing perspectives on rationality. Certainly rules prevent some abuse and result in greater fairness and are rational if abuse and fairness are called for. If efficiency and flexibility are preferred, then a rationality of tossing out rules and substituting the superiority of mission is called for. It is also likely that the results will be predictable—more efficient, innovative, and flexible government, *and* government that is less fair and more open to abuse or corruption.

The layering of rules and regulations is an enormous frustration for public managers. Overhauling civil service systems and purchasing systems to provide greater flexibility and control at operating levels makes rational sense. Because the layering of regulations is driven largely by laws and political micro-management, the trick is somehow to get elected legislators to go along.

Two additional features of the reinvention perspective connect to the question of rationality. First, it is clear that the reinventing government movement is generally popular with *elected executives* (mayors, governors, presidents). It is a reform ideally suited to executive electoral politics. Like most earlier reforms, such as the Hoover Commissions, the reinventing reform is favorable to the interest of political executives. Elected legislators (city councils, school boards, state legislators, Congress) are ordinarily not inclined to reduce their influence over either the substance or the processes of policy implementation. A major theme of reinventing government is elected executive frustration with the annual budgeting-revenue-expenditure cycle. The reinventing movement calls for two- and even three-year cycles as well as executive spending and saving flexibility between cycles. This is "rational" in the executive and managerial sense. It is less than entirely rational from the perspective of elected legislators who do not wish to diminish their power and control. Gilmour and Halley's recent (1994) analysis of the federal bureaucracy describes it as *comanaged* by elected

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officials in both the executive and legislative branches. Serious students of city and state government describe the same comanagement phenomenon (Frederickson, 1993).

The reinventing government movement turns the old policy-administration dichotomy on its head. In the traditional dichotomy, Congress (city council, state legislature) makes laws, and the civil service, under the oversight of the president (mayor, governor), carries it out. In reinvention, the elected executive and the empowered public service engage in "steering," in setting "missions," and in getting "results." These are all metaphors of political power that speak to the realignment of that power in the direction of elected executives. The new public administration was also seeking more steering but presumed that public administration was a legitimate partner with elected executives and legislators in the steering enterprise (Goodsell, 1994). In the new public administration, it was also understood that steering was a mostly political phenomenon.

At a philosophical level, the differences are great. Reinventing government favors steering over rowing and empowering bureaucrats to steer. But toward what should they steer? This fundamental question is begged. It is implied in Osborne and Gaebler (1992) and other similar works, and in the NPR, that the steering is toward more efficiency and greater productivity. New public administration is explicit in its directions or preferred state. The values to be achieved are an active and engaged citizenry, a fully functional constitutional democracy which includes a careful balance of majority rule and minority protection, and a professional public service committed to both efficiency and equity.

Finally, the reinventing government perspective avoids the policy-administration dichotomy issue and the rationality issue by using the word-concept "governance." At the critical points at which questions of whether a policy ought properly to be the province of the executive or legislative branches of government, the word "governance" is used (Frederickson, 1996). One line in Osborne and Gaebler's *Reinventing Government* has become famous for the moment: "This book is about governance, not politics" (p. 247).

Any serious student of government or public administration would likely argue that it is difficult if not impossible to unbundle politics from governance. Indeed Waldo (1948) would surely argue that governance is politics and that all theories or models of public administration are also theories of politics and power.

Organizational Structure and Design

If not virtually the same, both reinventing government and new public administration have essentially the same perspective on organizational design and structure. Both call for decentralization, flatter hierarchies, funding projects, contracting out, and systems of coproduction or public-private partnerships. Issues of structure and organizational design appear to have changed little in 25 years.

One important difference distinguishes the two. New public administration is more institutional, more inclined to service provision, and more managerial while reinventing government is more inclined to a de-institutionalized government that brokers competing service providers. Obviously the former requires a greater concern for hierarchy and management while the latter requires a greater concern for structuring incentives, conducting contract oversight, and practicing managerial innovation.

Theories of Management and Leadership

New public administration and reinventing government are somewhat similar in substance regarding their approaches to management and leadership. But they are very different in tone. Both call for democratic and participatory work-group practice and teamwork. New public administration calls for authority in the work group whereas reinventing government notes that authority is delegated up. In reinvention, public managers and workers are to be empowered. In new public administration, government work should be a satisfactory experience. New public administration calls for shifting the emphasis from managing the insides of an organization to managing boundary relations with citizens, other government agencies, interest groups, and elected executives and legislators. In reinvention, the effective manager is enterprising, entrepreneurial, innovative, and risk-taking.

The most important management and leadership difference between new public administration and reinventing government is the obvious commitment to an effective professional public service and the equitable implementation of public policy on the part of the new public administration and the systematic bashing of bureaucracy in the reinvention movement. Although this bashing is denied, the public service is routinely held up to ridicule in the reinvention movement. When this is pointed out to reinvention advocates, they reply, "We are only ridiculing *bureaucracy*, not bureaucrats. We believe bureaucrats are good people trapped in bad systems." However well meaning this distinction, it is lost on virtually all careful observers. The irony, of course, is that much of Osborne and Gaebler and other reinvention literature is filled with copious praise for public managers they identify as entrepreneurs. This puts their work in parallel with a recent literature, coming largely from policy schools, extolling the virtues of so-called entrepreneurial public managers (Cooper and Wright, 1992; Behn, 1991; Doig and Hargrove, 1987).

Osborne and Gaebler call for building a culture of creativity and innovation in public management. The emphasis on innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship in the reinventing government perspective may be rather overdone. Concluding a 16-corporation study of innovation for Arthur D. Little, John M. Ketteringham and P. Ranganath Nayak (1993) state:

The good news is that extraordinary ideas can emerge from any environment.... Breakthroughs can emerge just as readily from no organization at all.... The reason for this is that breakthroughs are children not of the milieu, but of the mind.

If, as a manager, you make the development of breakthroughs a corporate mission and begin to pontificate

on your strategies to attain this objective, the creative people in your organization will immediately recognize you as the worst sort of pompous ass and will retire to their recreation rooms and garages to work on their ideas as far as possible from the cheerleading scrutiny of Big Brother and the holding company.... management actions that have fostered breakthroughs...fall...in the realm of "responsiveness" rather than under the heading of "management."

Laurence Lynn (1992) applies this finding to public administration and reinventing government in this way:

Everyone will claim credit for the successful innovation after the fact, but who will defend, against political opposition and lawsuits and negative evaluation findings and hostile media coverage, the several failures that are necessary to achieve a single success? My own belief is that much government red tape, stifling rules and daunting paperwork that sap creativity and drives good people away from public service are a product of a zero defects mentality on the part of political leaders who lack the guts to defend and tolerate mistakes and to give bureaucrats the opportunity to be creative.

Epistemology, Methodology, and the Issue of Values

Issues of epistemology and methodology were important in the development of the new public administration. One argument concerning relevancy was the position that the canons of social science and the dominance of quantitative methodologies were pushing both the knowledge base of public administration and theories about the field toward small and unimportant issues and away from the big pressing issues of the day. This was a reaction to the behavioral revolution in the social sciences, particularly in political science. Behaviorists, in that era, were regarded not only as excessively driven by methodological issues but also as adherents to pluralism. They were seen by those associated with the new public administration as conservative defenders of the social status quo, all dressed up in scholars' clothes (Marini, 1971).

It was not surprising, then, that adherents to the new public administration were thought to be radical. The irony is that the new public administration was probably less radical in its time than reinventing government is today. Because the downsizing features of reinventing government are so widely implemented, the risk is that a serious decline in public administrative effectiveness will result. In the long run, this may be a much greater risk to public administration effectiveness than the humanistic/social equity objectives of the new public administration.

New public administration advocates were, and are, somewhat conflicted on the matter of methodology. Virtually all of them are trained social scientists, who hold continuing beliefs in the efficacy of fact-based knowledge and the importance of a describable knowledge base to the field. There was, and is, a tendency toward eclectic methodologies, so-called triangulation, and a welcoming ecumenical view of social science methods.

It is fair to say that issues of methodology are not central to the emergence of reinventing government. Much of the presentation

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of facts in Osborne and Gaebler is based on the direct recounting of the experiences of others.² Issues of replication, verification, and peer review are largely neglected, although somewhat more rigorous versions of the reinventing perspective are found in the works of Barzelay (1993) and Cohen and Eimicke (1993). Two keen observers of this literature, Overman and Boyd (1994), describe this approach as the "best-practices" methodology and literature and suggest that it does not rise to the level of empirical social science.

The value preferences of the two movements are both similar and different. Both movements place a high value on better, more innovative, more creative, more sensitive management. Both movements hold to the view that organizational structure and design make a difference. Both movements emphasize clients, citizens or customers, albeit in somewhat different ways.

The most important difference in values between the two movements is political and philosophical. In new public administration, politics, democratic government, issues of majority rule-minority rights, and associated issues were central. New public administration was greatly influenced by the Laswell argument that politics, including public administration, determines who gets what, when, and how.

In contrast, the reinventing government movement claims to have little to do with politics. By the generous use of symbols such as governance, total quality, entrepreneurial, and reinventing, the movement attempts to skirt fundamental political issues. Put in harsh terms, reinventing government begs basic philosophical political questions and is politically naive. Put in positive terms, reinventing government tries to be smart enough not to get trapped politically.

Reinventing government is clearly a managerial argument. Indeed, like the Downs and Larkey (1986) assessment of the work of the Grace Commission, it could be said of reinventing government that it has the "wrong-problems problem." In the wrong-problems problem a government seeks to avoid making tough policy choices that deal with real public problems and instead turns to better management as the universal solution. Through better management, can we solve the health care issue? Probably not. It is politically tempting to try because workable solutions to meeting the health care needs of citizens are terribly expensive. To some extent, the reinventing government movement gives comfort to elected officials who are tempted to engage in wrong-problems problem strategies.

Finally, the reinventing government movement is connected closely to, and provides a positive rationale for, downsizing government. It could be argued that reinventing government has made reducing the career civil service even more politically acceptable. It would be unfortunate indeed if the primary long-term legacy of reinventing government were the diminished capacity of govern-

ment to implement policy or the creation of so-called "hollow states" (Milward and Provan, 1993; Kettl, 1991).

Conclusions

This comparison brings us to the following conclusions. In terms of management and organization, reinventing government resembles new public administration. Both movements have as their impetus the need for change. Both are committed to responsiveness but in different ways. In new public administration, it is a professional public service dedicated to both efficiency and social equity. In reinventing government, it is the empowerment of individual customers to make their own choices. The two movements differ in that new public administration is more institutional and political whereas reinvention is less concerned with capable institutions and seeks to sidestep political issues. Issues of rationality, epistemology, and methodology are not especially important to reinventing government and are more important to new public administration. Finally, the two diverge sharply over issues of values. Reinventing government elevates the values of individual choice, the provision of incentives, the use of competition, and the market as a model for government. New public administration is concerned more with humanistic and democratic administration, concerned more with institution building and professional competence, concerned more directly with issues of politics and with matters of justice and fairness—broadly under the label of social equity.

Many of the managerial and organizational approaches suggested 25 years ago by the new public administration are now identified as successful innovations by the leaders of reinventing government. In this sense, it could be said it took 25 years for the application of new public administration organization and management concepts to be broadly accepted in government—not in the language of new public administration but in the language of reinventing government.

National politics as well as some state and local politics have been almost unrelentingly antibureaucratic since the early 1970s. The reform era died. The era of positive government is dying. The irony is, of course, that in this antibureaucratic era reinventing government should have such a strong appeal, particularly to elected executives and those wishing to be elected executives. This "uses" management and public administration to strengthen executive leadership. Almost universally it has resulted in downsizing the professional civil service and increasing private and nonprofit government contracts. Has it improved public administration? In the short run, reinventing government probably has purchased some increased efficiency but at a considerable cost in the long-range capacity of public institutions and professional public management. There is no doubt that the near-term emphasis on efficiency in reinventing government has taken a toll on social equity.

Reinventing government is currently popular politics, while

claiming to have little to do with politics. Because so much of contemporary politics is conservative, one should not be surprised that elected officials use reinvention to achieve conservative purposes.

Is reinventing government just old wine in new bottles?

The answer is mostly, Yes. But then the new public administration was also attacked for being old wine in new bottles. I am inclined to the views of John Dewey (1927) on this question. Each generation must construct its own reality. There is probably not much that is new under the sun, but, to each new generation, many things seem importantly new and useful. In that sense, reinventing government is useful. But the mistakes of earlier generations are often repeated. As the former Poet Laureate Howard Nemerov (1987; 6) put it: "The reason we do not learn from past mistakes is because we are not the people who learned last time."

Will reinventing government pass from the scene with minimal lasting effects or will it have an enduring presence in government administration?

Reinventing government, on one hand, is a highly visible, almost flamboyant, promise to improve government administration, coming primarily from outside the body of public administration. It is unlikely that the rather high expectations associated with this promise can be met. New public administration, on the other hand, was once described by Dwight Waldo as like a ductless gland. By that, he meant a subtly influential and comparatively quiet movement among both scholars and practitioners within the body of public administration. If the values of new public administration have been influential, that influence has been gradual, systematic, and subtle.

The political appeal of reinventing government will probably gradually diminish. Only so much downsizing and loadshedding that can be done. The logic of getting more for less is destined to end. Social problems, crises, and scandal are likely to be around that corner. Government will be our principal recourse, and competence, expertise, and professionalism will be expected. Both new public administration and reinventing government will inform our thinking when that corner is turned. Remember, however, that it will be a new generation who will take society around that corner. They will need to build their own version of public administration which will be neither new public administration nor reinventing government. There is no doubt that the coming generation will create a version of public administration they regard to be a new paradigm.



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Notes

1. My former student and good friend, William Eimicke of Columbia University, suggested this comparison. He challenged me with the assertion that reinventing government is in many ways a 1990s reiteration of the new public administration. I thank him for the idea and for his comments on an earlier draft, as well as the comments of Phillip J. Cooper, John Nalbandian, Richard Stillman, E. Sam Overman, Chester Newland, Dorothy Olshfski, David G. Frederickson, David Rosenbloom, James D. Carroll, James Thompson, Dwight Waldo, Robert E. Cleary, and Charles Goodsell.
2. As is always the case, stories of innovation or reform reflect the perspective of the teller. For a contrary telling of several stories in *Reinventing Gov-*

ernment, see James Fallows, "A Case for Reform," *Atlantic Monthly*, pp. 119-23 and a two-part series in the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* by Dennis J. McGrath, a Minnesota reporter who visited Visalia, California, where Ted Gaebler served as city manager, and the scene of several of the success stories. "The word entrepreneur has been officially banned from city hall lexicon." "A downtown development deal built on creative financing collapsed, leaving taxpayers with a sour taste for the government-as-a-business experiment." Politics in Visalia is now described as "back to basics" or "back to common-sense" (January 11, 1994). See also Rob Gurwitt, "The Entrepreneurial Gamble," *Governing*, vol. 7 (May, 1994), pp. 34-44.

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